

## NECESSARY EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES for TEACHERS and STUDENTS (NESTS) FOR THE START OF THE 2017 SCHOOL YEAR

At NESTS we believe the most important strategy for teachers is to [get to know your students](#). The biggest difference you can make in your students' lives is getting to know them. We know that the key to success for students is social. Whatever their age, your students will thrive if you take the time to build solid relationships with each of them.



We know this can be a challenge. You don't want to go too big and embarrass your students by making them do silly icebreakers but you don't want to go too small either and risk missing an important opportunity to learn. So we've put together a guide for you to read and share. Here is our [NESTS for the start of the 2017 School Year](#).

1.

### More Than Just An Introduction

Mention playing an icebreaker game to your grade 10s and you can expect it to be received with a groan, or at the very least a few rolling eyes. However, ice breakers can be extremely helpful activities that allow students to feel comfortable in your class.

### GROUPS AND ORDER

Here are two icebreakers in one.

In the first icebreaker students gather into Groups decided by some common factor e.g. having the same eye colour, number of siblings or a birthday in the same month or even speaking a language other than English.

For the second icebreaker Order have students arrange themselves in lines ordered by some particular criteria that you call out, e.g. the number of their house, how long you travelled to school today or in alphabetical order by first name.

### This or That

This icebreaker helps students find kindred spirits, and possibly even friends, easily and without having to step out of their comfort zone. In this icebreaker students move to either one side of the classroom or the other based on their opinion. If they strongly support one topic they may be asked to go to the right of the classroom and the other students go to the left or if they are ambivalent they may choose to stay in the middle. Topics should be light e.g. "Who do you prefer, Taylor Swift or Katy Perry? Winter or Summer? City or Country? Soccer or AFL?" Then they explain why they chose their side to the students who have joined them and have an informal, friendly debate with the students on the other side or in the middle.

### Your Own Favourite Icebreaker

Most teachers have a few icebreakers under their belts so try them out and see which ones work best for your students. These will really help you to get to know your students.



## 2.

### Getting To Know All About You

After a fun ice breaker students should feel more comfortable in class but nothing quite lets you get to know your students like a Getting-to-know-you fact sheet. Handing out a fact sheet in the first few days provides a private forum for students to tell you anything that is important to them or anything that you might need to know about them. The Getting-to-know-you fact sheet could include the following questions: what sports a student plays or a hobby they enjoy, jobs they do at home, who they live with, allergies they may have or where they spend most of their time outside of school.

## 3.

### Putting It On Paper

Now that you have this information from the questionnaire it's time to document it somewhere. While it is valuable to read all the answers to the surveys, the real benefit of this information is that it allows you to keep up to date with your students.

Set up a spreadsheet to store the information you gathered so that you can easily access and update student information. You can also see which students you need to engage further with so that you truly know all your students.

### SAMPLE SPREADSHEET

NAME	FAMILY	GOALS	SKILLS
James	Lives with mum and has three cats.	Become a vet.	Gardening, Looking after the cats.
Hannah	Mum, dad and four older sisters.	Learn to play piano this year.	Maths, Singing.
Alex	Lives with dad during the week and mum on weekends.	Make new friends.	Whistling, Baking cookies.

## 4.

### REVISIT YOUR SPREADSHEET

If you implement the above strategies to create positive relationships with your students we believe you are setting your students up for success. But the most important part is to keep revisiting these strategies throughout the year. Keep building your relationships with your students through regular revision, actively survey students to find out how they feel they are going. Ask how they feel about class rules and procedures, whether homework and assignments feel fair and if they feel they are being challenged.

Building relationships with students seems so simple we may not even think about it.

We all think we know the students we teach however the students who most require our understanding and empathy are often the students who need these fact sheets the most.

We need to specifically address our knowledge about the many students we teach. Once we start our teaching routine it can be easy to forget to make the time to continue to build our relationships with our students.

These steps are the key to addressing NESTS get to know your students.

